

The State of the City  
Or  
The Tale of Four Cities

The City Today...which is great!  
The City that was.  
The City that we might have been.  
The City that we can be.

Thank individuals and boards in the room.  
Thank city staff in the room.  
Without these people and the groups they represent, I wouldn't have much to brag about today.

One good thing about not running again is that I don't have to be sweet and lovable any more.

In January, I will not be retiring (That statement scares you, doesn't it?) No, I will just be transitioning to doing other things that will be contributing to our community.

I do hope that groups, organizations and the city will find things for me to do. I will do anything to get out of "honey do" lists. (After this talk, I may be placed on an "unwanted" list.)

If I had known of the many nice comments that were going to be said to me in the past month, I would have started stepping down a long time ago. Of course, people always say nice things to you when they know you are leaving.

Believe it or not, I had really wanted for this to be a humorous, reminiscing talk, but the more I thought about our town, I knew that this could be my last

opportunity to talk about past, present, and future facts of Marietta as I know them. The fun talks will be later; I promise you.

I am so proud of Marietta! Marietta has had unprecedented progress in the past eight years. This is not a brag on me; this is a brag about what everyone has accomplished.

For me to talk about the State of the City, present and future, I must talk about the past. I believe in the saying, “You have to learn from the past.”

No matter how great Marietta has become, I do get angry when I realize about how much better the city could have been if the city had received a supportive, and properly critical press, not the hostile one we have received.

Here is living proof! If you have any doubts about what I am about to say about the Marietta Daily Journal’s attitude about Marietta, just look around the room. The Atlanta Journal Constitution is here, with a reporter and a photographer. The Marietta Daily Journal is not here. No reporter, no photographer, no usual videographer. With their approach to Marietta, this is not surprising and it doesn’t hurt my feelings.

They are proving that they don’t consider the State of the City important enough to have anyone here. You see, according to them, when it comes to Marietta’s Progress and Positive Changes, it doesn’t exist if the MDJ doesn’t report it.

Some of you may just dismiss my defense of Marietta as a personal matter between Otis Brumby and me, and you really don’t want to be bothered. Not true, I have the upmost respect for the financial and press support that he gives to many non-profits, charities, and churches. I have great respect for the MDJ in their coverage of local sports, human interest stories, lifestyles and *Cobb Life*. I have great respect for the good he has done and could do. I have great respect for him as a husband, father, and grandfather.

I have no respect for the MDJ's unwarranted attacks on individuals, local governments, institutions, school systems, and practically all redevelopment projects in the city. I must give recognition to the MDJ for the damage it has inflicted on Marietta.

As repeated countless times in the MDJ, "The public has the right to know." I agree; the public does have the right to know all the facts about Marietta, the Cobb County School System and every other issue in Cobb County. However, when the MDJ makes this statement, I think it really means that the "MDJ has the right to control."

I will try to say this nicely: As the city council and I know, on many city issues, the MDJ is out of touch with the great majority of Marietta citizens.

I have no problem that the MDJ might disagree with either the city or me. Good journalism should do that as long as it sticks to the "whole truth and nothing but the truth; and it does not vilify individuals.

Marietta has become a great city today, but an angry press did not make it that way.

Now, the Tale of the City we might have been, had we followed the MDJ's demands.

Had we followed the MDJ, the city would not have three successful TAD projects. The State of Georgia authorized the use of TADs to get rid of blight and to "kick-start" redevelopment projects in difficult areas. You and I, the city, and the school system have profited greatly from these projects.

If Marietta had not done this, in spite of severe press criticism, in this Renaissance TAD District, we would still have the same blight and the highest crime rate in town. (It did have the highest murder and drug rate.) We would still have over hundreds of transient, crime-ridden rental units.

Park Street Elementary School would still have the highest transient student rate in the city. The school system and the city taxpayers would still be subsidizing over 100 transient students. This last fact alone has saved our taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We would not have attracted new and younger homeowners, with better buying power. We would not have millions of dollars in new investments because of the “Halo” effect. We would not have the million-dollar improvement in Henry Park, paid for with TAD funds. We would not be getting over a million dollars of new street and sidewalk improvements, streetscapes and intersection improvements in this TAD district, paid for with TAD funds.

Lately, I have seen some newspaper columns about doom and gloom and so-called taxpayer risk from our TAD projects. I will try to reply politely...they lie.

Had we followed the MDJ’s directives, the city would not have pre-funded our SPLOST road projects. The city would be waiting, like the county and the school systems are, for sales tax revenue to come in during this economic downturn before they can start many capital projects. Instead, this year, the city is starting 41 road projects, all at great savings for the Marietta Taxpayer. More importantly, our citizens will be benefitting from traffic improvements sooner than we would have otherwise. In just a year or so, Marietta will look so much better, and it will function better.

Had we followed the MDJ’s orders, the Marietta Conference Center would not be leased to the Remington Corporation; the city taxpayers would still be paying for losses in its operation. Of equal importance, the city would not have made it possible to elevate the quality and standards of the Conference Center to become a Hilton Resort. If the MDJ had been in charge, the city would not have made “a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.

Unfortunately, because the city council did follow the MDJ's demands, the city now has a big hole on Powder Springs St, where Johnny Walker Homes once was. This is now referred to by some as the "Brumby Memorial Hole." In 2004, the MDJ, by manufacturing false "facts," stopped the council's approval of the wonderful redevelopment project by one of Otis's most disliked persons, John Williams. Had the MDJ supported this project, even with Otis's "hated TAD," that project would have been completed, on the tax roles, with new homeowners, shops and restaurants, long before this economic downturn.

If you need proof of this statement, examine the new downtown center in Suwannee GA. John Williams did start this much larger mixed-use development in same time frame, in 2004. It is now completed and fully-occupied. Even with this economy, this project is still going forward in its third phase. When I saw this wonderful, completed project, I got sick for what should have happened in Marietta.

To this day, the paper still crows that this land was sold without a TAD, as if that is vindication of opposing redevelopment and blind opposition of TADs. Of course, the property could have always been sold that way. However, because of the MDJ's blind opposition and without a TAD, it is still just a "hole" five years later.

Here is an important fact: From 2002 to 2004, Marietta enjoyed a good, supportive, properly critical, press. The turning point came when the Marietta Redevelopment Corporation and I proposed the John Williams' redevelopment project with a TAD. Do you ever wonder why Marietta is practically the only city in the nation where TADs have been declared to be evil and unneeded subsidies for "rich" developers?

Even though the city has greatly improved the Franklin Rd. area, it could have been better. The MRC worked with a very qualified developer to have a major trend-changing mixed-use redevelopment project for Franklin Rd. It would have required a TAD. Would it have worked? We will never know. After several press attacks, the developer left and stated that there were many

other communities he could work in where the press is supportive and not out-right hostile.

At Wynhaven Apts., on Powder Springs St., the city approved a TAD project that would have replaced 400 transient, high crime, apartments with an up-scale redevelopment project of 200 homeowner units and commercial space. This unbelievably good project was stopped with a lawsuit that the MDJ encouraged and still supports. Now, the city and the school system still have the problems from these apartments. This is costing us all hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars and causing more crime. We still have more transient people and school children of unknown citizenship.

The city has suffered some losses of valuable employees because of our hostile press. Even worse, we were not able to hire several valuable management people because they went on line and “googled” the city and our newspaper. They decided they did want to work in this environment.

All of us could be enjoying some much-needed traffic relief if the MDJ had not actively opposed some important street improvements.

I have been criticized for suggesting an examination of the idea of a “Marietta Parkway” improvement. This was not widening Whitlock Ave., and this was not the old “Reynolds St. Connector.” All I was asking the city council to do was to authorize a complete engineering study and investigation to find the pluses and minuses of this proposal. At that stage, I was neither for nor against it. I just felt that all possibilities and options should be examined. Again, the MDJ led the charge so that the council votes changed, and they did not approve the study.

The Powder Springs Road Connector was endorsed by the two previous city councils, including the one before I took office. More importantly, the voters and the County Commission in the 2005 SPLOST vote approved this specific traffic relief road. This is a binding contract with our citizens.

This new road would divert through traffic off of Powder Springs St. and the Loop, out of Marietta and away from the Conference Center. It would connect Powder Springs Rd., close to Booth Rd., to South Cobb Drive.

It has received opposition from the MDJ and from two council members based on the unfounded fear that it might cause more cut-through traffic in Whitlock Heights. No traffic engineer has supported this fear. If for no other reason, since I have two daughters and families living in Whitlock Heights, I could not support this if I thought it would hurt their neighborhood.

Just like Pogo once said, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” The current cut-through traffic is not from West Cobb and Paulding County, and it would not be in the future. This traffic is us; the Marietta citizens already know where to go. In fact, these same engineers make a good argument that cut-through traffic could even be decreased with the completion of this connector.

I know that people pray and hope that the county’s Macland Rd. Connector will relieve some of this traffic congestion next year. I would love for that to be true, but I am convinced that the result will be the same as when, 15 or 20 years ago, we were told to wait for the completion of the East-West Connector because it would relieve the traffic on Whitlock Ave. Lots of luck.

Without a reduction of the current 50,000 cars a day on Powder Springs St., going past the Hilton, redevelopment of that area will be more difficult and the Hilton will not reach its full potential.

More recently, the Cobb-Paulding-Marietta Transportation Task Force recommended a pains-free traffic solution for the long traffic delays on Whitlock Ave. in the afternoon. This would add a second out-bound lane from Kirkpatrick Drive to Mount Calvary Rd. on Dallas Highway. This is NOT widening Whitlock Ave. in the residential area. The right-of-way is already there. No homes or commercial building would be destroyed. This

would definitely reduce cut-through traffic on Polk St. and Maple Ave. This could also eliminate the dangerous trail crossing at Cheatham Hill.

Again, no support from the MDJ. This needed project has the same old unfounded fears that it might, just might, cause cut-through traffic in Whitlock Heights, and that (Oh, horrors!) this also could be the first step to widening Whitlock Ave. No such thing.

For years I have heard statements like, “If the city had just taken action 20 or 30 years ago, we wouldn’t have the traffic mess we have today.” I wonder what the Marietta citizens will be saying 5 or 10 years from now since the city does not have the elected officials and the press to make the necessary changes today. For too many years, “doing nothing” has been the wrong, and only, answer.

Through the years, the MDJ has opposed practically all Marietta redevelopment projects and proposals, even those not requiring TADs. It has opposed practically all traffic improvement projects. Now, the MDJ is attacking the MRC, calling for its dissolution.

If you knew all the facts, you would know that the MRC and its well-qualified volunteer board are pursuing and examining many creative ideas for redevelopment that can be effective, even in this economic downturn. The MRC does have other tools in addition to TADs.

As I stated, the city is in great shape today, in spite of this economic downturn. Among other items, Marietta has a balanced budget, better services with less city employees, than it had in 1993. It has the lowest city tax millage and the lowest power rates than any other city and utility around us. Again, you haven’t read this in the MDJ.

No one likes paying property taxes. However, if you ever got a tax bill on your home using any other city’s millage, you would be proud of Marietta.

However, I do see some challenges in front of us.

The good news, bad news, is that only about 15% of our operating budget comes from property taxes and these are not increasing even with our new commercial buildings. About 22% of our budget comes from the BLW, and these profits may go down because of increasing wholesale costs of power and water. Bad news: Conservation works! The city does have decreasing utility sales.

The rest of our budget comes from building permits, business licenses, fines and other fees. We already know that these will decrease next year.

Even though we know that Marietta is not as affected by this economic downturn as the rest of metro Atlanta and parts of Cobb County, we are still hurt by it and it has stopped some of our redevelopment efforts. I do see some improvements in the next year, but I do not see a major reversal any time soon.

The city already has a hiring freeze. We have enforced a 15% reduction in our operating budgets. We are delaying needed capital replacements. The city can not delay our on-going 10-year utility capital replacement program. A year from now, balancing the city budget will be difficult.

I am so proud of Marietta's accomplishments, but I know it could have been better.

Many of you realize the problems that the entire county has with our hostile press. Many people are afraid to stand up out of fear that they and/or their institution or government could be the next target. I know; I sat silent as many others did, when, 15 years ago, the MDJ went after the Promina Kennestone Administrator, Bernie Brown. I wanted to protect Dunaway Drug Stores.

Again, I sat silent, as many others did, when the MDJ ran Marietta School Superintendent, Roy Nichols, and Marietta High School Principal, Herb Garrett, out of town. I wanted to protect Dunaway Drug Stores.

I sat silent, as many others did, when, 15 years ago and 5 years ago, the MDJ tried to do a character assassination on John Williams. I wanted to protect The 1848 House and the city. John did fight back, he sued the MDJ.

I sat silent, as many others did, several years ago, when the MDJ did a successful character assassination on a very honorable person, General Joe Redden. I was trying to protect Marietta. Agree with computers or not, no one deserves the treatment he received.

I am ashamed of myself.

Until today, I have sat silent, as many of you are doing now, while the MDJ is going after Fred Sanderson, Gordon Pritz, and some members of the Cobb County School Board.

I am now standing up for them. They do not deserve the personal attacks they are receiving and most of you know that.

The MDJ should have enough Journalism Ethics to disagree without stooping to their tactics. These vilifications are wrong, and many of you agree, but you are afraid to say it publicly. I understand; I have been there myself.

For the past years, in many areas, the MDJ has been the largest negative force in Cobb County and in Marietta.

I'm just not smart; I should not be speaking out on in this manner because this could endanger the city's possible bond referendum in November. I should realize that, no matter how great it would be to have the citizens to make their own decision for the future of our parks, the MDJ might come out against it just because I am in favor of it.

For far too long, elected officials and many public and private boards have made decisions, and not made decisions, based on: “What will the MDJ say?” For all of our future, this should never be a factor in doing what is right. I am sure that fear of the MDJ’s reactions has kept many new and innovative ideas from being put forward.

## WWOD

The major challenge I see for Marietta is for it to receive a supportive and properly critical press, not a hostile one. If Marietta does not receive this, then our city officials will have to have the courage to stand up for what is good and right, and not knuckle under if the MDJ goes off on tangents.

The city officials will have to have the courage to remember that they are the people elected to represent the citizens with their own intelligence...not the special interest groups, not their close friends, and certainly not the whims of a newspaper publisher. The elected officials are the ones that should decide Marietta’s future and keep the control of those goals.

A few weeks ago, a MDJ reporter was writing an article and wanted to write what I considered to be my most important achievement. The correct answer is that this is for the citizens to decide, not me, and not the MDJ. However, he needed a statement.

That answer is easy. Even at the risk of my reputation, as might be printed in the MDJ, but in trying to help Marietta’s progress and its future, I am most proud that because I inherited the guts and intelligence from my parents, and because I received the support of from friends and family, I am an elected official who stood up to Otis Brumby and said “That’s wrong.”

Defense of your city, of your city's goals, of your city staff should be part of all mayors' job descriptions.

I had tried so many times, in personal meetings with Otis, to get his support for progress and to change this hostile approach. The MDJ did not change; so, two years ago, in my Chamber talk; finally I was left with no alternative, I went public, asking for and demonstrating for his support of Marietta. What the heck, I knew it couldn't get worse.

Several days later, Jon Gillooly came into my office asked a question and delivered a threat. He asked why I was taking this position with Otis and the paper. I gave him an answer he just couldn't understand: In all my life, in business and in office, I have never worried about the personal consequences of my actions as long as I was making the decisions for what I knew was right.

He then stated that, if I didn't change, the MDJ was going to do to me what they did to General Joe Redden. He had already stated that if they could handle a Three-star general, they could handle the mayor of a small town.

I do give them credit for trying, but they haven't done it. However, I am sure the reporting of this talk, and for the next 6 months, and for years to come as the MDJ manufactures my "legacy," they will continue to try to do a "Joe Redden" on me.

I know; I know; this talk has way too much "Bravado" in it, so I'll stop.

Marietta has done well. I do not place all of the blame on the MDJ for any lack of any success in the past eight years. I get my share and some others do too.

The current council and I still need to accomplish so much in the next 5 ½ months. We can make even more progress. We should not have any "Lame Ducks."

Now, I want to talk about “The City that we can be.” I do see some positive changes Marietta could have for the future.

For the past two years, the city has been working for the future of our parks and recreation. We have received expert advice, had many public meetings; we have received other public input; the council and the staff have approached this problem with a well thought out, analytical, approach.

Some uninformed people have criticized the city because we started with an outside study. Hey, that is the responsible business approach.

We did start with an independent, statistically accurate study. Kennesaw State University conducted a survey of Marietta citizens as to the parks and recreation the city has and what they want in the future. The study also did a full inventory of each city park, what each has today, what each park needs in way of repair, and what each park could have for the future.

The study proved that Marietta is deficient with its green space, parks and recreation, using practically any recognized measurement of comparison to other towns and counties.

Today, our citizens, old and young, expect and deserve more parks and amenities than they did just a few years ago. Better parks and recreation are necessary for redevelopment and attracting more people to Marietta.

The [Draft Parks Master Plan](http://mariettaga.gov) are available on the city website, mariettaga.gov. I ask the people in this room, the Chamber, and the MDJ to examine and read what the city has done, and is trying to do, to address this proven and critical need for the future.

The city council is now considering putting a parks bond referendum on the ballot for the city elections this November. Please encourage and support having a parks bond referendum. Let the citizens decide.

I do know that this November election will have the most city voter attention than at any other time for the next four years. Next year, a parks bond referendum would be lost as an issue with State elections, state constitutional amendments, and congressional elections. I do not want our citizens to have to think about a parks referendum and a SPLOST vote on the same ballot.

To delay this referendum until next year would be a true “opportunity lost” for our future. Our citizens need and deserve more and better parks, green space, and recreation.

In considering this, I think the council is getting beyond Ward Politics because park improvements will help the entire city, no matter whose wards they are in.

Already, I have heard a few statements and inferences like, “If the improvements are not in my neighborhoods, I don’t want to spend the money.”

Hey, people, let’s be ecumenical about our future. People in my Kennesaw Ave. neighborhood should be thrilled of improvements in Whitlock Heights. Whitlock Heights people should be thrilled with the possibility of a park where we don’t have one now, like in the Franklin Rd. area. And so on.

Everyone should be thrilled that we have over 73 acres of undeveloped park land at Burruss and Wildwood that can be developed into field sports, large play areas, bike trails, etc. We don’t even have to pay the high cost of land acquisition for so many new and needed activities.

It doesn’t have to happen in your backyard. What’s good for there is good for here and vice versa.

I do ask for the MDJ’s support and your support to let our citizens decide.

I am told that, as mayor, I cannot campaign for the passage of a parks bond...What are they going to do? Kick me out of office?

Another critical item for the future of Marietta is a much-needed change in the city charter so those future mayors can be more effective in leadership for the city.

This part of the talk is impossible to make exciting, but it is very important.

Many people have been quoted as to the need for changes. I know that I am the person with the most experience in what is right and wrong in the mayor's position. I do have some definite opinions for needed changes.

I knew what the position of mayor was when I was elected. I have operated in this capacity with some difficulty, but I think, effectively.

Marietta does not need a change in its basic system of government; it does not need a change in the ward system; it does not need a change in the council committee system. The committee meetings are really needed work sessions, but, believe me, they are unnecessarily too long.

With my experience and knowledge, only two charter changes are needed:

1. The mayor has a vote on all items. Yes, that would be 8 votes, an even number. I know of cities, other governments and other boards that operate well with an even number of votes. So what if you get a rare 4-4 tie? That just means that the people that are in favor of that item will have to work harder to get someone to change their position.

This vote is more important than you realize. The mayor is the only person that represents the entire city; the only elected person who must consider the effects of city actions on the entire city, not just in any one or in a few wards.

This vote would make the council members to have to consider this citywide position on any ideas that they may have. This vote would make the mayor's positions and involvement a necessity, just like each council member's involvement is necessary. This vote could lessen some of the bad effects of "Ward Politics."

Of equal, or greater importance, the mayor's position and vote is needed on all city appointments, salaries, and hiring.

With this change, the council would have to consider the Mayor's thoughts equally, not just as an afterthought...if at all.

With this change, the mayor's veto power would still remain.

2. Just like I do as Chairman of the Marietta Board of Lights and Water with the BLW agenda, the Mayor should also set the Council agenda. The committee system would still function, and they would be recommending agenda items. If the mayor rejects a recommendation, the mayor could be over-ridden with four votes. The staff would assemble the agenda for the mayor's approval, just like the BLW staff does for me now.

The need for this agenda change is very hard to realize if you have not been closely involved in city government. In the past eight years, I can think of only a few agenda items that should not have been placed on the council agenda. However, I can think of items that were considered that wasted meeting time, wasted staff time, and wasted many taxpayer dollars.

Of course, the city council will never consider, much less approve, these changes. (I guess this take care of any chances I may have that the next City Council will appoint me to anything.) The only way we the city can have these charter changes is through a blue ribbon, independent task force similar to the independent Marietta

Redevelopment Task Force, which was headed by Micky Blackwell. This new ad hoc group should examine my two suggestions and other ideas.

As I have reflected over the past eight years, if both of these Charter changes had been in place, then even better things would have happened. Also, some the good things that happened, like getting rid of FiberNet and the money-losing Conference Center contract would have happened sooner, saving the Marietta taxpayers millions of dollars. Who knows? Marietta might possibly now have a multi-million dollar redevelopment project on Powder Springs St., completed and occupied.

“The fly in the ointment” for any charter changes is that the majority of the Cobb Legislative Delegation must be convinced that changes in the City Charter are needed. Hopefully, this Charter Change Task Force will make recommendations that they will favor.

Concerned citizens need to step forward now. This Task Force should be formed now; its recommendations should be considered by the Cobb Delegation for a vote in January during the coming legislative session.

Times a wasting...I hope there are some people in this room that will do this. Will you?

Marietta needs a change in the city’s new Ethics Ordinance. Council Member Goldstein inserted a subtle clause in it that allows any council person to vote on “district-wide” issues. This is the clause that allows Philip to vote on items affecting the Square. This is the clause that permits council member to put self-interest in front of “what’s best for the city.” This is wrong as far as I am concerned, but it is perfectly legal unless the Ethics Ordinance is changed.

Now, finally, “The State of the City:”

I really hate to use this following paraphrased quote: “This is change you can believe in.” Believe me; it is here in Marietta.

The State of the City is great; it is fine. Please listen and listen well: Marietta has made more progress and more positive changes in the past eight years than in other similar period in its history. I have made and proved this statement many times in speeches in the past several months. If your only source of information were the Marietta Daily Journal, you would not know of this since it has never been mentioned in their wonderful reporting.

I cannot take credit for this unprecedented progress. Many other people and groups do: the city staff, the city council, civic groups, the Chamber, etc., etc. The MDJ did support a few positive changes, so I will give it credit for the past. However, most of this progress has been in spite of, not because of, the MDJ.

None of this unprecedented great progress has been reported in the MDJ because it would refute their printed myth that Marietta is “a city in urban decline.” In fact, last month, the MDJ videoed my entire Kiwanis presentation that proved this “Progress” statement. That Thursday afternoon, this entire video was placed on the MDJ website; a few hours later, it was completely gone. I wonder why it disappeared. Do you wonder why I get upset?

Thank goodness, in this internet age and for other reasons, the MDJ is becoming a less important source of information for Marietta.

I invite you to go to our award-winning city website, [mariettaga.gov](http://mariettaga.gov), and read and view the text and videos of these [two presentations](#). You will find the details and proof this amazing Marietta progress. None of my talks are ever great, but the facts are great! You need to [subscribe to our Email News](#); get all the facts and the good news about your city. The [text and video](#) of this presentation will be on the website. Help spread the Good News!

I said that this period had the most change in Marietta’s history. That’s not exactly true. There was a more dramatic change in Marietta in 1865,

(Sherman slide) when the North sent down first urban renewal specialist, General Sherman. He did cause the most change in our town, but I don't think that was considered "progress."

Many of the details of the improvements in ordinances, city operations, current condition of the city, and the massive new investments in Marietta are on the display boards, here in this room. Please see the real proof of Marietta's unprecedented progress and positive changes.

Using just one example: If you add up all of the investments in roads, sidewalks, streetscapes and utilities, and the new private residential and commercial investments, and the new institutional investments, you will easily find that Marietta has had approximately a billion dollars in new investments, completed or under way. Not bad for a city the MDJ says is "a city in urban decline."

I think you already know about the "Tale of the City that was," what Marietta was like 8 or 9 years ago. Some parts of the city were stagnant; it was not moving forward. However, the city did have great foundations to use for the future, and it did have a great city staff to facilitate positive changes.

My history is that I am never completely satisfied with things I have done because I can always see how it could have been better. However, I am very happy with this amazing progress that Marietta has achieved. These positive results have come from so many efforts by so many people. In the future, I may regret that I am not still involved in city government, but I am proud of where Marietta is today and what it is going to be in the future.

All the necessary talent, assets, morale, and attitude are here, in our town.

This is really the "Fifth Tale." This is "The Tale of the City that we will be!" I am excited. I will always love Marietta and I will always work for our town.

Do any of you want to hire me as Press Relations Consultant?

Thank you for the opportunity and privilege of serving you, but you still have 5 ½ more months of me. Marietta could not have made the progress it has had without your support. I know I could not have made the past eight years without your support and friendship. You have made the few bad days disappear in my memory.

And another special “Thank You:” Here’s to Dot and my family: You will always be my First Lady and you will always be my first family.

OK, if I haven’t already gone over the top with Bravado, I will now:

The MDJ once called me “the most controversial mayor in recent history.” Considering the source and the reason, this may be nicest compliment I have received.

From my years of running my own businesses, I learned a real fact that transfers to being a mayor: If you don’t stand behind you city, if you don’t stand behind your city staff, you can’t get out in front and lead.

I didn’t change; I did what I knew was right. I think Marietta is better for it, and you’re right, I’m damn proud of it.